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President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 170

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe

Draft resolution (A/55/L.8)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Italy to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.8.

Mr. Vento (Italy): As Permanent Representative of the State that is the current Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, I am honoured to introduce a draft resolution on this new item in the agenda of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. Allow me to also take this opportunity to welcome the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Walter Schwimmer, and the delegation from the Council's Parliamentary Assembly that is here to follow the work of the General Assembly.

This item was inserted in the agenda in accordance with Recommendation 1411 of 21 June 1999 of the Council's Parliamentary Assembly, which stressed the need to enhance cooperation between the two organizations, in view of the contribution that the Council of Europe has made to the United Nations over the past 50 years, particularly in promoting the rule of law and the protection of human rights and democratic values.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe started in 1951, just two years after the Council was founded, with the signing of an agreement that was updated 20 years later, in 1971, through the Arrangement on Cooperation between the secretariat of the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

Another milestone was the adoption at the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly of a resolution granting observer status to the Council of Europe.

The draft resolution that I am presenting today cites more recent examples of this cooperation, as follows.

At the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000", the Council of Europe contributed to the fight against trafficking in women and to the promotion of gender mainstreaming, while at the twenty-fourth special session, on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, the Council embraced the strategy for social cohesion, focusing on the protection of social rights, access to housing, employment and social protection and family and children policies.

The Council has supported United Nations efforts to restore peace in Kosovo by establishing close working relations with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and focusing on legislative reforms in line with texts such as the European Convention on Human Rights.

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On 11 to 13 October 2000, the Council organized a successful pan-European Conference on racism and intolerance to prepare for the 2001 United Nations World Conference in South Africa.

Other tasks lie ahead: the Council of Europe intends to contribute actively to the special session of the United Nations General Assembly for the follow-up to the World Summit for Children, scheduled for September 2001.

In his recent visit to the Parliamentary Assembly in Strasbourg, the President of the Italian Republic, Mr. Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, recalled the high ethical and political beliefs that inspired the founding of the Council of Europe. It embodied the faith of European citizens in a system of shared values, enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, whose fiftieth anniversary will be celebrated in Rome on 3 and 4 November with a Ministerial Conference. Some of the pillars of this ambitious legal system are the European Social Charter, the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. These instruments, together with other conventions and recommendations, have helped consolidate the principles of freedom and justice in Europe. Moreover, the original vision of the Council of Europe helped pave the way for the integration of the European Union.

The borders of European civilization are not pre-established or strictly linked to geography. Rather, they depend on the power of these values to be understood and shared throughout the world. The Council currently consists of 41 States, representing more than 800 million people, but others will soon join, giving the organization a pan-European dimension. The Holy See, the United States of America, Canada, Japan and Mexico are observer members. Within the organization, consideration has begun on the possibility of granting a special "cooperative" status to countries interested in participating in its work, particularly in the field of democratization and modernization of the judiciary.

As Secretary-General Kofi Annan pointed out during his recent visit to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, amid the great transformation known as globalization the world is still fighting intolerance, racism, xenophobia and desegregation — the very dangers targeted by the founders of the Council of Europe.

This is why we are convinced that closer cooperation with the United Nations can bear great results. This is why we would like to consider the idea of creating a liaison office for the Council in New York on a reciprocal basis.

I wish to conclude by recalling that the Council of Europe, as the sole pan-European organization, is in a position to make a substantial contribution to the United Nations in meeting its rising challenges. To grapple with these challenges effectively will necessitate a synergistic coordination of our efforts and resources.

For example, the Venice Commission, the Council's authoritative advisory body on legal and institutional matters, which celebrated its tenth anniversary last June, has begun to elaborate a package of standard legal elements and constitutional proposals towards finding a solution to the ethnic conflicts of member States.

Moreover, the interaction between culture and the environment is one of the main themes of a Ministerial Conference taking place in Florence even as we speak. On this occasion, an important new legal instrument, the Landscape Convention, has been opened for signature. The Convention contains highly innovative content and proposes to raise public awareness of quality-of-life issues.

However, the most important concept inspiring the actions of the Council of Europe, which I am convinced that the United Nations also fully shares, concerns democratic stability — entailing the interdependence of human rights, democracy, good governance and the rule of law, as well as conflict prevention, peace-building and stability. For more than five decades, the Council of Europe has been developing significant expertise in these issues. It is thus now able to make an increasingly substantial contribution to the prevention of conflict and, when unfortunately necessary, to long-term post-conflict peace and institution-building. The Council of Europe's capabilities in conflict prevention lie in a combination of standard-setting, cooperation — both collectively between all member countries and bilaterally — and monitoring, at the legal and political levels.

At this historic juncture, it would be timely for the General Assembly to ask the Secretary-General to explore ways and means of enhancing an already

advanced cooperation in order to meet the challenges, old and new, of the third millennium.

Since both the Council and the United Nations place human dignity at the centre of their missions and mandates, stronger working links between them can only aid in the achievement of their noble cause.

Mr. Bossière (France) *(spoke in French)*: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia and the associated countries: Cyprus, Malta and Turkey associate themselves with this statement.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe has existed for a long time. It has developed constantly over the years especially since the agreement concluded in 1951 between the two institutions. In 1989, the observer status granted to the Council of Europe at the United Nations has enabled it to play an active role in areas of activity they have in common. This relates, first and foremost, to the protection and promotion of human rights, but also to the tireless quest for peace and international security.

Experience has shown that these two areas of activity are interdependent and that they reinforce each other. Security cannot be achieved without democracy and respect for human rights. This approach has been called, in the context of the Council of Europe, the quest for democratic stability.

Today, we have reached a new stage. The draft resolution submitted to the General Assembly constitutes a first in relations between the two organizations. It should, in the long run, strengthen the two major areas of cooperation: defending democracy, based on the pre-eminence of the rule of law and respect for human rights, but also, strengthening the contribution of the Council of Europe to regional security.

The defence of democracy based on the rule of law and respect for human rights is the first area of cooperation.

The Council of Europe, thanks especially to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, has done exemplary work in the area of human rights. In particular, it should be recalled that, with the creation of the European Court of Human Rights, the Convention established machinery, unique in Europe, for jurisdictional control of the respect for all of these basic rights by States parties.

On 3 and 4 November, a European Ministerial Conference, to which the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is invited, will take place in Rome in order to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Convention.

The draft resolution before us quite rightly emphasizes the many challenges facing the United Nations and which the Council of Europe also must face. By way of illustration we could refer to cooperation between the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and also that which exists between the International Law Commission of the United Nations and the Council of Europe, as well as the Council's contribution to the preparatory process for recent special sessions in two areas of major importance for human rights and social progress, namely, Beijing Plus Five and Copenhagen Plus Five.

The European Union cannot fail to encourage the Council of Europe to maintain its active role, the one it has thus far played, and invite it to continue to work towards the realization of the commitments entered into during those two Summits and the follow-up special sessions.

The European Union also welcomes the contribution of the Council of Europe to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which will be held in 2001. In this connection, it welcomes the excellent progress made and the results from the pan-European Conference held in Strasbourg last week, in preparation for the 2001 World Conference.

Through these actions, the Council of Europe is confirming its determination to play a key role in the implementation in Europe of the principles of the United Nations Charter.

The contribution of the Council of Europe to regional security is the second area where the United Nations could establish prospects for action.

The participation of the Council of Europe in regional security should, first and foremost, be judged by the facts. We can thus applaud its active

contribution to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) through its cooperation with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the establishment of an observer mission of the Council of Europe for the elections in Kosovo on 28 October. Similarly we should cite Sits handling of tasks entrusted to it by the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the protection of human rights and the reform of the judicial system.

A third creditable contribution to regional security is the assistance that the Council of Europe has provided to the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe.

These actions are also part of the preventive diplomacy that the United Nations tries to develop. In the long run cooperation in this sphere could also foster and speed-up the difficult but necessary transition from an approach that is too often reactive in nature to actions that are based more on prevention. The European Union is also in favour of developing relations between the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe.

In conclusion, allow me to make three suggestions aimed at further strengthening cooperation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

There should be an increase in the exchange of information. The United Nations and the Council of Europe have a mutual interest in a greater and more frequent exchange of their reports and documents.

Bilateral relations between the two bodies should be strengthened at the highest level. In a symbolic manner, the holding of annual meetings between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe would confirm the determination of both sides to have increased cooperation between the two organizations.

The expertise of the two bodies should be enhanced. The establishment by the Council of Europe of a think tank to deal with issues of common interest to the United Nations and the Council, from which the United Nations could draw on technical skills and know-how, could also contribute to further enhancing working relations between the two organizations.

From now on it will be for the General Assembly, as part of its annual consideration of the draft resolution on this item, to follow up this task of reflection and ingenuity in order that the contribution of the Council of Europe to the promotion of human rights and regional security may usefully support the work of the United Nations throughout the world.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): My delegation very much welcomes the initiative to give the issue of cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe its rightful place as a specific item on the agenda of the General Assembly. We especially appreciate the efforts of the Italian Government in realizing this.

In striving towards our vision of a United Nations for the twenty-first century, strengthening relationships and increasing cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is intrinsic to the achievement of their ultimate common goals. Organizations such as the Council of Europe — which have an important role to play in promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law — can, without imposing any of their views and values, comprehensively furnish the United Nations with long-term pan-European experiences, thus contributing to, and further enhancing, the United Nations in its work to resolve some of the most pressing global challenges before us.

The Council of Europe remains the leading regional organization in the field of the promotion and protection of human rights, in both standard-setting and in the implementation dimension. It should be noted that the European Convention on Human Rights was adopted in 1950 as the first legally binding instrument devoted to the protection of a wide range of civil and political rights. As cited in its preamble, the Convention was clearly inspired by the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, thereby acknowledging even then an important link between the United Nations and the Council of Europe system.

Here at the United Nations the Council of Europe enjoys observer status, with links between the two organizations well established. However, this is the first time that the General Assembly has discussed cooperation between the two, and it is our hope that it will result in the establishment of stronger cooperation and specific joint programmes.

During recent years, cooperation has slowly begun to increase within the framework of enhanced United Nations cooperation with regional organizations. The practice of convening meetings between the United Nations Secretary-General and the heads of regional organizations, including the forthcoming fourth meeting on the theme of cooperation for peace-building, is welcome. However, we feel that they should be more frequent and be followed-up by meetings between the heads of specific programmes and officials of the respective organizations. The practice of the tripartite high-level meetings between the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe is a prime example of where cooperation and coordination of activities in areas of common concern is already functioning.

In discussing current cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe, we should mention the close cooperation established under the framework of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), where, upon the invitation of the United Nations, the Council of Europe seconded its experts, who are working in the area of judicial reform, local and regional democracy, property rights and on a population census.

I turn to Croatia's own experience. During the process of the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia, which was at the time governed by the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES), in the context of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, the Croatian Government witnessed the establishment of excellent cooperation between UNTAES and the Council of Europe in the field of developing education curriculums for minorities. Such cooperation and, more important, its results were highly praised by the international community at large.

With regard to our neighbour Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia welcomes the readiness of the Council of Europe to continue to fulfil the role assigned to it in that country under the Dayton Peace Agreement. The Republic of Croatia believes that membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Council of Europe would have a very positive impact on further democratic development and the protection of human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The cooperation between the two organizations could be enhanced in a number of ways, including a better flow of information and the availability of relevant documents at meetings convened by both organizations. With its expertise in the field of the promotion and protection of human rights and legal reforms, including the very important area of local and regional democracy, which has no counterpart in the activities of the United Nations system, the Council of Europe could significantly contribute to the activities of the United Nations.

One of the key issues in rethinking the role of regional organizations in the changing world remains the timely division of activities between the United Nations as the universal Organization, on the one hand, and relevant regional organizations, on the other. With this aim in mind, a streamlining of activities is needed in order to make better use of available resources and avoid unnecessary duplication of activities. With regard to relations between the Council of Europe and the United Nations, such duplication may occur with respect to human rights monitoring mechanisms. Despite human rights monitoring mechanisms remaining a main goal of both organizations, without due comparison of achieved results duplication of monitoring may simply result in significantly divergent reports on the same human rights situation.

As a member of the Council of Europe and the United Nations, Croatia has actively contributed to the work of both organizations. In recent years Croatia has been the subject of human rights monitoring mechanisms operated by both, thereby having experienced in practice some of the predicaments I have just mentioned. More specifically, in 1992 monitoring by the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights was established, and subsequent to the membership of the Republic of Croatia in the Council of Europe, in 1996, Council of Europe monitoring was established, covering both human rights and democratic developments. Recently, the Parliamentary Assembly decided to end the monitoring procedure, welcoming Croatia's significant progress towards honouring its commitments and obligations as a member State since its accession in 1996, and in particular since the parliamentary and presidential elections held earlier this year.

In the light of the circumstances, the Republic of Croatia expects that these achievements and the

continuing progress on its part should act as a pertinent benchmark to be adequately and appropriately reflected in the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

Croatia fully supports the strengthening of cooperation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations, being aware that that regional organization, with its specific characteristics, can significantly contribute to the work of the United Nations. The Council of Europe's expertise in the development of human rights standards, in particular through the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, should undoubtedly be reflected in the work of the relevant United Nations bodies. The same is true with respect to the achievements of the Council of Europe in standard-setting in the field of local and regional democracy, something which has yet to be achieved within the United Nations system.

Last but not least, the parliamentary dimension of the work of the Council of Europe should not be neglected, and could possibly provide guidance for future developments within the universal family of the United Nations.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Within the framework of diversifying its foreign policy, Mexico has strengthened and deepened its bilateral, inter-regional and multilateral relations with Europe and with European institutions in the political and economic spheres and in terms of cooperation. In December 1999, Mexico became an observer at the Council of Europe; this has led to fruitful dialogue with the Council's 41 member States and to active participation in all areas of common interest. My country attaches great importance to the work of the Council of Europe, which was reflected in my Government's decision to establish a permanent representation office in Strasbourg to follow the Council's deliberations and decisions.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe has contributed to the success of the Organization's missions and programmes in Europe. Thanks to its genuinely pan-European nature, the Council has been a significant factor in the quest for peace and security and in promoting the values, purposes and principles of the San Francisco Charter on the European continent. My delegation is convinced that strengthening that cooperation will yield real benefits for both organizations, and we hope that the Assembly will adopt draft resolution A/55/L.8, of which Mexico is pleased to be a sponsor, without a vote.

Mr. Bergqvist (Sweden): Let me stress first of all that I entirely associate myself with the message delivered by the presidency of the European Union.

The Council of Europe was created half a century ago as a peace project. After two devastating world wars, the organization was set up to promote reconciliation and peaceful cooperation among democratic States. After the fall of the Berlin wall, the Council of Europe was faced with new important challenges. As we know, its membership has nearly doubled over the past decade; today, more than one fifth of the States Members of the United Nations are also active members of the Council of Europe.

The inclusion of the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe was considered to be a major factor in promoting peace and preventing conflict in Europe. Security is built on common values. The founders of the Council of Europe wanted to share a peaceful future based on common values: democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and human dignity. Indeed, with great relief, we have seen examples of yesterday's enemies becoming today's partners in building a better tomorrow.

The reasons why the Council of Europe places so much emphasis on democracy and human rights are clear enough. Lack of democratic processes and non-observance of human rights often lead to alienation and violent conflict. Instead, security should be based on institution-building, participation and dialogue. There can be no sustainable solutions to violent conflicts without democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The Council of Europe is now also developing its activities in the field. I shall give just a few examples. In the framework of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, the Council of Europe leads activities on issues such as creating ombudsman institutions, promoting inter-ethnic reconciliation, and gender issues. In Chechnya, the Council of Europe provides three experts to the office of the Ombudsman to assist him in his work to investigate human rights abuses. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

pays visits to prisons and other institutions in individual member States, and reports on its findings.

When developing activities in the field, we should place particular emphasis on cooperation among international organizations. That is why Sweden welcomes the draft resolution (A/55/L.8) before the Assembly on cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe. Such cooperation could be enhanced through extensive use of regular contacts, including meetings; a continuous framework for dialogue; increased transparency; and practical cooperation, including the appointment of liaison officers and points of contact, cross-representation at appropriate meetings and other contacts intended to increase understanding of each organization's tools and methods.

Stronger bonds are good both for the United Nations and for the Council of Europe, and not only because we can achieve less duplication and a more efficient use of resources. We can also strengthen the support for our common values and achieve better protection for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Civilian crisis management and conflict prevention are areas now under rapid development in various international organizations. That makes cooperation essential. It is gratifying to note that the Brahimi report puts emphasis on the need to make peacekeepers and peace-builders inseparable partners. As stated in the Brahimi report, peace-building missions should include international judicial experts, penal experts and human rights specialists in sufficient numbers to strengthen rule of law institutions. The report also notes that long-term preventive strategies must work to promote human rights, to protect minority rights and to institute political arrangements in which all groups are represented. These are areas in which the Council of Europe possesses a special expertise and in which cooperation should be of great value to both organizations, and indeed of great value to our peoples. Let us therefore work together in order to prevent future violent conflict.

Mrs. Fritsche (Liechtenstein): It gives me particular pleasure to address this item on our agenda, since the Council of Europe is the oldest political organization in Europe and one whose high standards and principles concerning the rule of law, human rights and democratic institutions are exemplary.

In the view of my delegation, a strengthening and further enhancement of the cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe is long overdue. Although the relationship between the two organizations dates back to 1951, when a cooperation agreement was concluded, the aim then was much less ambitious than it is today. Fundamental changes and developments have taken place since that time. The membership of the United Nations has increased and its original mandates have expanded, and similar developments have occurred with respect to the membership of other organizations, including the Council of Europe.

There are a number of areas in which the Council of Europe can reinforce the purposes and principles of the United Nations and in which Member States can profit from the Council of Europe's experience, in particular in the fields of post-conflict peace-building, confidence-building measures, human rights, social development, the fight against racism, and crime prevention.

The Council of Europe has played, and continues to play, an important role in promoting a stable and democratic south-eastern Europe. The cooperation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) is a good example of concrete interaction in operational activities, in this particular case in the areas of the judiciary, the protection of minorities, property rights, registration and local democracy, as well as the observation of the electoral process in Kosovo. In the same region, namely in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Council of Europe is engaged in the field of judicial reform and that of the protection and promotion of human rights, and it is making a major contribution to the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe.

The Council of Europe has been, and will continue to be, actively involved in past and future United Nations conferences and special sessions and their respective preparatory processes. The latest examples are the special sessions on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Beijing + 5. The European preparatory process for the World Conference against Racism and Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which will take place next summer, is being conducted by the Council of Europe,

and we note with satisfaction the results of the Pan-European Conference which was held in Strasbourg last week.

In this respect, we wish to pay tribute to the work of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), which was established in 1993 following the first summit meeting of heads of State and Government of Council of Europe member States. The Commission is composed of public figures chosen for their high moral authority and recognized expertise in dealing with questions of racism and intolerance. They include judges, parliamentarians, journalists and psychologists. Along with its examination of international and national legislation, the Commission has studied policies and practices and has addressed specific issues as well. The success of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) can be attributed to its activities on raising awareness, disseminating information and cooperating with non-governmental organizations.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the presence of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Walter Schwimmer, as well as that of members of the Political Affairs Committee and of the Sub-Committee on Relations with Non-Member Countries of the Parliamentary Assembly. Their presence underlines the commitment of the Council of Europe to build a closer relationship with the United Nations.

The draft resolution before us contains all the necessary elements which form the basis for increased cooperation between the two organizations. Liechtenstein will actively support all endeavours leading to the realization of this aim.

Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino): The Republic of San Marino welcomes the inclusion of the item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe" on the agenda of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. We are extremely thankful to the delegation of Italy, which promoted and sponsored this remarkable initiative.

San Marino co-sponsored the draft resolution on "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe" because it is convinced that cooperation among States and regional organizations is an integral part of the concept of peace. It is now clear that the efforts made by the Secretary-General, the General Assembly and the Security Council to maintain peace, to ensure respect of human rights and the rule of law and to apply the values of democracy are ineffective without the cooperation and support of other entities acting in the international arena, primarily regional organizations.

The United Nations and the Council of Europe are two complementary organizations and should therefore be linked by an intensive cooperation with a view to reaching their common goals, while avoiding, whenever possible, duplication and overlap in those areas in which both organizations have their own respective and specific roles to play.

Forty-one member States, from every European region, now form the Council of Europe. For this reason, and because of its particular institutional structure, the Council is a unique forum for discussion on issues of regional and global interest. The effective action of the Council of Europe in the field of human rights, for instance, is evident from the activities of the European Court for Human Rights. This judicial organ has, in fact, led many States to reconsider practices that could have adverse effects on the full enjoyment of human rights by their own citizens.

We have witnessed some examples of the cooperation between these two organizations and the important results that it has brought about, especially in the fields of human rights, humanitarian activities, assistance to refugees, legal and social issues and culture and education. My delegation deeply appreciated the contribution made by the Council of Europe through its participation in many activities of the United Nations, inter alia, the special session of the General Assembly on women, "Women 2000", and the special session on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, as well as its constant presence at the regular meetings of the Third Committee of the General Assembly.

I would like in particular to stress the role played by the Council of Europe in the crisis in Kosovo in supporting United Nations efforts in the search for a peaceful settlement and its eagerness to offer its cooperation, in its fields of competence, to political and institutional reconstruction. We are also grateful to the Council of Europe for the coordination of the European Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related Intolerance to which the United Nations was invited.

By resolution 44/6, the General Assembly granted observer status to the Council of Europe. We therefore strongly support a more effective presence in New York and the more active involvement of the Council of Europe in the work of the General Assembly.

The Council of Europe is now in a position to increase its already substantial contribution to the United Nations. It may contribute effectively to increasing democratic stability and building pluralistic democracies, as well as in many other fields where its expertise is well recognized. It may also be an important vehicle to spread the principles of the Charter of the United Nations in Europe and in other regions of the world. We very much hope the Secretary-General will continue to explore, in close consultation with the Council of Europe, different possibilities to further enhance the cooperation between the two organizations.

Mr. Boisson (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): I am grateful to you, Mr. President, for allowing the representative of a European State Member of the United Nations that is not yet a member of the Council of Europe — although we are fervently aspiring to become one — to speak on the agenda item on cooperation between the United Nations and that lofty and respected European institution.

The Council of Europe has given the continent a soul. Its ethical and normative work, which is rich and eclectic in nature, has greatly contributed to making that institution a moral reference point, not only for Europe, but without doubt at the global level.

Its continent-specific mission can in no way be regarded as an obstacle to cooperation between the two organizations. The common values and principles that inspire them and that are to be found inscribed in golden letters at the very heart of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as in the Statute of the Council of Europe, the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter, are universal in nature. They can be promoted without difficulty through actions designed and implemented in concert. Whether we are speaking about the promotion of human rights and civic freedoms, the strengthening of representative democracy or the protection of minorities, the concerns of the two organizations converge. That is an essential bond that is very favourable to joint undertakings.

That great and very worthy institution — with its headquarters in Strasbourg, at the very heart of a region long battered and bruised — is unquestionably a symbolic example of the precious contribution that regional cooperation can make in the world if it is based on respect for shared principles and values.

Cooperation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations, as well as its specialized agencies, stems from the same moral reference point and from identical ethical commitments. For example, we note with satisfaction, from document A/55/191, that the Council of Europe has concluded agreements with a number of agencies of the United Nations system, such as the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, whose activities are greatly appreciated by the Principality of Monaco, which regularly contributes to them. The many conventions and legal instruments, which are essentially profoundly ethical in nature, developed within the Council of Europe are also, we are pleased to say, a specific and useful manifestation of this commitment.

This issue provides the delegation of Monaco with the opportunity to express the admiration of my country for the work that has been done for more than half a century in the Council of Europe which, after the end of the Second World War, greatly helped to restore dignity, strength and traditional values to the European continent. These values are shared by the people of Monaco. They have been their values for centuries, since the first lord of Monaco — whose dynasty extended back to 8 January 1297 — set up in 1331 a general assembly of inhabitants, called at the time "the University", which had jurisdiction over all public affairs.

This community of inhabitants, which brought together all the heads of family, without exception, rapidly became a parliament, presided over by the lord or his representative, the *podesta*. For centuries this parliament, working in complete freedom, dealt with all the problems of daily life that the population might encounter. Its jurisdiction was extremely broad, covering the police, road maintenance, the organization of schools and poor relief. The people of Monaco were not subject to any levies on their property or on their use of communal ovens or mills, after the pattern of the freedoms practised in the Republic of Genoa, whence most of the people of Monaco originated.

More recently, in 1910, after the first constitutional phase — that of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, granted in 1848 — universal suffrage, with the right to vote extended to women, was established for the elections to the Communal Council. On 5 January 1911, the Principality of Monaco set up a modern-style constitution that provided for two democratic assemblies: the Communal Council and the National Council. These were kept under the constitution that was adopted on 17 December 1962 and which is now in force. That basic text, which, in its third chapter — not in the preamble — provides for fundamental freedoms and rights, thus attests to the political will to give such rights an effective and legally binding scope.

Thirty-two articles are devoted to this and guarantee, inter alia, political rights, the equality of citizens before the law, the security of the individual, the non-retroactive application of criminal law, the abolition of capital punishment, the inviolability of domicile and property, respect for private and family life, freedom of worship and freedom of expression. It also grants the people of Monaco freedom of employment and provides State assistance for the poor, the unemployed, the sick, invalids and the elderly and provides maternity benefits and free primary and secondary education, as well as allowing union activity and recognizing the right of assembly and association and the right to petition public authorities.

Whether we are dealing with individual civil and political rights or collective economic, social and cultural rights, or obligations of the State with respect to ends or means, all these constitutional provisions give nationals of my country, as well as foreigners, as prescribed by Article 32 of the Constitution, the effective enjoyment, with judicial safeguards, of all the public freedoms recognized and articulated in the constitutions of modern democracies.

The guarantee of these rights is further strengthened by the scrupulously respected fundamental constitutional principle of the separation of administrative, legislative and judicial powers and the functions stemming therefrom.

The Principality of Monaco is a State in which the rule of law prevails. The powers of the various authorities, as well as the acts of individuals, are limited, only by the law, which finds its formal points of reference in the Constitution, along with the remedies it has prescribed for use in the courts, which enable private persons to secure the repeal of public acts that are contrary to the law, and also reparation for damage suffered.

This brief *"pro domo"* account is intended to remind you that the Monegasque nation for almost seven centuries now has enjoyed a liberal, democratic and enlightened system of government, attentive to the interests and needs of the people and the various generations that have succeeded one another over time in this modest territory.

Democracy, first of all direct, then representative, which has been a feature of Monaco's entire history, has enabled the Monegasque people to share in debate; it has given them a taste for ideas, for dialogue and for respect for what is in the general interest, which can be seen today, very vibrant and alive in Monegasque society. It is undoubtedly one of the reasons for the harmonious human relations that prevail among the various communities in my country, as well as for its balanced economic and social development.

The delegation of the Principality of Monaco rightly appreciates the draft resolution that has just been introduced so brilliantly by His Excellency Mr. Sergio Vento, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of a country which itself is a historical cradle of our democracies, Italy. We wish to thank him very sincerely for this initiative and to assure him of the full support that we will give this draft. Today we wish to become a co-sponsor of the draft resolution, which correctly draws attention to the importance and quality of the cooperation that has been ongoing for a number of years now between the Council of Europe and United Nations institutions as a whole. It also highlights the need to continue and expand that cooperation.

The Principality of Monaco is perfectly ready to contribute further to this activity, both within the United Nations framework and in that of the Council of Europe. The concerted activities carried out in the parliamentary area and in the economic and social spheres, in education and research, as well as culture and communications, are given careful attention by the Monegasque authorities.

The constant struggle to protect human rights and freedoms, the application of humanitarian law, assistance to refugees and to victims of torture, abuse and discrimination is a struggle that we share.

The Principality of Monaco has actively participated, as has the Council of Europe, with its commitment to these issues, in these special sessions of the General Assembly devoted to women in the year 2000 and to social development. It is also preparing to participate very energetically, with a view to achieving real concrete results, in the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which will take place in August and September of 2001 in South Africa, and to which I am certain the Council of Europe will make a major contribution.

Lastly, we should note the major role in conflict prevention, and long-term peace-building that is increasingly being played by regional organizations in parallel with the United Nations. In this respect, the Council of Europe can offer its unique experience in the establishment of the rule of law, safeguards for social peace and international security, based on democratic rule and the protection of human rights. Its activities and recommendations in this area are of incalculable value. We should never hesitate to have recourse to its expertise.

Our very ancient liberal democratic tradition, which I have just described, has pervaded countless generations of the citizens of Monaco. It now permits them, alongside their Sovereign and their Government, to feel total concern for the ills and misfortunes of peoples, not only in Europe but throughout the world, affected by dictatorship, lack of freedom, violence in all its forms, poverty and under-development.

In conclusion, we welcome the presence of Mr. Walter Schwimmer, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, whose skill and dedication are very widely respected, and I take pleasure in confirming that the Government of Monaco, with the greatest possible conviction, encourages further cooperation between the two institutions and the unreserved strengthening of that cooperation.

Mr. Bojer (Denmark): I take great pleasure in taking the floor on today's item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe". I am especially pleased to be speaking here in the presence of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and of members of parliaments involved in the work of both the United Nations and the Council of Europe. In this connection, let me recall that at the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, held in August this year here in this Assembly, the Speaker of the Danish Folketing advocated strengthening the parliamentary dimension in relation to the United Nations and other international organizations.

Denmark was a founding member of the United Nations in 1945. And in 1949, only four years later, Denmark joined forces with eight other European countries to establish the Council of Europe. Since then, Denmark has considered its membership of both organizations to be not only a privilege but indeed an obligation.

The Council of Europe, like the United Nations, came into being as a result of those forceful words: Never again. Never again should our States suffer from the scourge of war. Never again should the peoples of the world see their human rights repressed, violated and obliterated. Never again should we experience the atrocities of the Second World War. This is the obligation of our membership, and it is the very thrust of both organizations. There is, in fact, an inextricable interrelationship — sometimes subtle, but always inextricable — between respect for human rights and preservation of peace.

On their own merits, and within their respective mandates, both organizations have important roles to play with respect to peace and security. Both organizations are building on norms of good conduct and strengthening and monitoring commitments to conform to these norms.

In the early years, the Council of Europe and its member States looked to the United Nations for inspiration and advice. The European Convention on Human Rights, the main convention of the Council of Europe, is directly inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Today the United Nations can look to the Council of Europe for assistance and support to approach the challenges it faces. The Council of Europe is in a position to contribute substantially to the prevention of conflicts — one of the major challenges facing the United Nations — through its legal framework for the protection of human rights and its mechanism for monitoring the obligations and commitments stemming from membership of the organization. These, in fact, are essential tools of preventive diplomacy of the kind so often advocated by the Secretary-General when he

emphasises the crucial dimension of conflict prevention in peace-building.

The draft resolution duly acknowledges that the Council of Europe is promoting the prevention of conflict and long-term post-conflict peace-building through political and institutional reform. Indeed, it stresses that the standards and principles of the Council of Europe contribute to the solution of conflicts throughout Europe.

We have already experienced the commitment of the Council of Europe to cooperate with the United Nations in the special sessions of the General Assembly following up the world conferences in Beijing and Copenhagen. And we are experiencing it in the preparations for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. In Kosovo, the Council of Europe will provide assistance in the upcoming elections. These are just a few examples. Others are also mentioned in the draft resolution, and more will materialize as cooperation broadens and deepens.

During the Millennium Summit the world's heads of State and Government took stock of the challenges that face the United Nations at the beginning of the new millennium. They resolved

> "To strengthen the capacity of all our countries to implement the principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights, including minority rights." (*resolution 55/2, United Nations Millennium Declaration, para. 25*)

The principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights, including minority rights, are indispensable to security and peace in the twenty-first century. My Government is confident that cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe will contribute greatly to peace and security.

Mr. Šerkšnys (Lithuania): Allow me to take this opportunity to welcome the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the members of the delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly.

Let me start by expressing my appreciation for there being an agenda item on cooperation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations. It provides a good opportunity to discuss possible ways for these two organizations to cooperate and how this regional institution might contribute to our work.

Despite some ongoing cooperation, the Council of Europe and its work have not received enough attention within the United Nations. Putting cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe on the agenda of the General Assembly and adopting a resolution on this item is a significant step in this direction.

Lithuania has always actively supported close cooperation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations. The Council is in a position to make a significant contribution to the work of the United Nations, in particular in strengthening of democratic security and in those fields where the Council's expertise is well recognized: the rule of law, human rights and social and economic rights.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

This year we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the European Convention on Human Rights. Post-war Western European Governments set out a list of basic human rights and freedoms, with the aim of achieving democracy and lasting stability on the continent. After 50 years we can say that the protection and promotion of individual human rights and fundamental freedoms have become an indispensable part of Europe's identity.

Since the organization's establishment, its shape and the scope of its work have undergone major changes. The arrival of Central and Eastern European countries in the 1990s meant that the institution became fully pan-European. Due to the new global challenges, the Council had to adapt to a new environment, which has become more diverse and complex. New priorities have been emerging. These include migration, social exclusion, minorities and corruption, as well as environmental protection, AIDS, drugs and organized crime.

The fact that countries from other continents show interest in the work of the Council greatly encourages us to promote the experience and achievements of the organization. We take this opportunity to welcome Mexico as the newest observer to the Council, which it has been since the end of last year.

Most of the issues and challenges dealt with at the regional level by the Council of Europe are the same as those we face at the United Nations. Therefore,

we see ample opportunities for constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

One of the main areas is the exchange of information and experience between the two organizations in the sphere of the protection and promotion of human rights and freedoms. In this regard, we attach great importance to the already ongoing cooperation between the Council of Europe and the officers of the United Nations High Commissioners for both Human Rights and Refugees. One example that might be singled out is the European Conference against Racism, which also dealt with intolerance, organized last week by the Council in preparation for the United Nations World Conference against racism to be held next year in South Africa. We also welcome the contributions of the Council of Europe to the United Nations special sessions, Beijing + 5 and Copenhagen + 5.

The Council of Europe plays an important role in implementing in the European countries the principles enshrined in the universal human rights instruments. In addition, we would welcome the Council's contributing to the work of the United Nations by making available the Council's expertise in strengthening human rights, democracy and the rule of law. We would also welcome the opening of a liaison office of the Council of Europe in New York, which would facilitate the sharing of information between the two organizations.

Conflict-prevention activities are another area where the Council of Europe could contribute substantially. The Council's legal framework for the protection of human rights and its mechanism for monitoring the obligations of member States demonstrate its expertise in this field. Moreover, the Council's achievements in the field of building democratic security, confidence-building measures, the protection of children, the protection of national minorities and the fight against racism might be very beneficial to these efforts.

In this regard, we commend the valuable ongoing contribution of the Council of Europe to the continued full and rigorous implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). The Council of Europe has established close working relations with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) on a wide array of issues.

In 2001 Lithuania will assume the presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Among other priorities, emphasis will be placed on the consolidation of the Council's efforts to foster the values of human rights, civil society and democratic stability throughout the continent. The experience of successful cooperation between the United Nations institutions and the Council of Europe in the Balkans demonstrates that constructive working relations between the two organizations would also be of great value.

In conclusion, I express my hope that the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly and the adoption of a resolution will give us an opportunity to exchange views about possible ways for these two organizations to cooperate, and will also prepare a good framework for establishing a target-oriented constructive relationship.

Mr. Kouliev (Azerbaijan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I wish to thank the Government of Italy for having taken the initiative of including this item on the agenda of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly and for having introduced the draft resolution on this item. Its adoption will undoubtedly give new impetus to the cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe, the basis for which was established in 1951.

I am also pleased to welcome among us the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Walter Schwimmer, and the delegation of the Sub-Committee on relations with non-member countries of the Parliamentary Assembly, whose presence here today testifies to the importance of the item under consideration.

The Council of Europe, established in 1949, was the first pan-European political institution. The goals and tasks of the organization are the achievement of greater unity among its member States through cooperation in all spheres, except for military issues, on the basis of a single value system comprising dedication to democracy, respect for human rights and the primacy of law. The implementation and promotion of such values are the concrete mandate and raison d'être of the Council of Europe.

Azerbaijan's entry into the Council of Europe and adherence to European conventions and other international legal instruments were an historical and strategic necessity. This aspiration was directly defined

by the deliberate choice of our people, which considers itself to be an inalienable part of Europe, to establish European values and standards in Azerbaijan.

Over the years of its independence, Azerbaijan has achieved significant progress in political, social, economic and cultural development. Our country has significantly strengthened political and economic stability. A constructive dialogue among the various political forces, free activity of the mass media and the gradual introduction of market reforms have become open realities in today's Azerbaijan. In the past four years, from the moment Azerbaijan requested full membership of the Council of Europe, we have achieved great progress in ensuring the primacy of law, the protection of human rights and the building of a democratic society.

I wish to inform the Assembly that the Republic of Azerbaijan has begun to implement its post-application commitments, as set down in Opinion No. 222 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Azerbaijan has adhered to 14 conventions of the Council of Europe and in February 1998 was the first country in the region to abolish capital punishment. The next important step on the road to democratic reform was the abolishment of press censorship in August 1998.

In recent years, in the context of judicial reform, Azerbaijan has taken a number of steps to bring our judicial-legal system into conformity with international standards, including the requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights, its Protocols and other European instruments. Azerbaijan's legal system has also established a tripartite judicial system consisting of a high court, an appeals court and a constitutional court, which in turn serves to strengthen the trust of citizens in the legal system.

Azerbaijan is currently preparing for parliamentary elections scheduled for November 5. The legal basis for these elections is laid down in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and in recently adopted laws and normative acts in conformity with international requirements. I would also stress the special role played by the expert assistance supplied by international organizations, including the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Commission for Democracy through Law, in the preparation of electoral legislation and in the improved implementation of these laws. The great majority of these recommendations have already been taken into account by the Government and Azerbaijan is prepared to pursue this successful cooperation.

The Government of Azerbaijan is taking all the necessary measures to hold free and fair elections. I wish briefly to affirm that the Central Election Commission has taken the decision to allow most leading political parties, including the opposition, to participate in the forthcoming parliamentary elections on a proportional basis. During the elections, we will also establish the conditions necessary to inviting numerous observers. It is well known that Azerbaijan already hosts a long-term Observation Mission of the OSCE and we are inviting observers from the Council of Europe as well.

The aforementioned reforms and other actions that we have undertaken will also be further implemented. This process has become irreversible. Of course, problems and difficulties remain, but we are overcoming them with the very important help of experts, including those from the Council of Europe.

It is well known that Azerbaijan is experiencing a difficult moment in its history. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country are being cruelly violated by a neighbouring State. One fifth of our country's territory remains under the occupation of Armenian forces, while 1 million Azerbaijani refugees and displaced persons continue to suffer. The ongoing 12-year armed conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia has not only harmed Azerbaijan, but is also preventing the establishment of stability throughout the southern Caucasus and delaying the democratic development of our States.

It is well known that, in 1993, the United Nations Security Council adopted four resolutions demanding the unconditional withdrawal of occupation forces from the territory of Azerbaijan. As of 1992, the OSCE has dealt directly with the settlement of the conflict. Unfortunately, the resolutions and decisions adopted have yet to be implemented.

In spite of the difficult and tense situation, the leadership of Azerbaijan is observing the ceasefire regime and doing its utmost to hasten the settlement process. In its recent letters to the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe and the President of the Council's Parliamentary Assembly, the President of

Azerbaijan again reaffirmed my country's commitment to settling the conflict peacefully on the basis of the norms and principles of international law in the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group.

The strengthening and harmonization of relations with the Council of Europe will be significantly promoted by joint action in the context of Azerbaijan's cooperation programme with that organization. I wish to stress that the positive influence of the speeding and strengthening of reforms in Azerbaijan and of the enhancing of democratic institutions in our country is being exerted through the close cooperation of Azerbaijan and the Council of Europe within the framework of the programme of Activities for the Development and Consolidation of Democratic Stability. We are prepared to discuss with the Council of Europe ways and means to improve the programmes for cooperation.

We regard entry into the Council of Europe not as a goal in itself, but as the beginning of a long-term partnership within the framework of a united Europe, designed for the further improvement of the bases established in recent years of a democratic and free society in Azerbaijan.

The Council of Europe, the sole pan-European organization, can make a substantial contribution to solving the growing problems of the United Nations. It can also make a substantial contribution in those areas in which its experience is recognized, in particular in helping to establish pluralistic democratic States based on the primacy of law and respect for human rights. The Council of Europe can thereby promote the reaffirmation — especially on the European continent — of the ideals set forth in the United Nations Charter and their propagation elsewhere in the world. That is why we support today's draft resolution and hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Moushoutas (Cyprus): We fully associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union. We have asked to add our voice to the subject, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe", because, like many other States, we are members of both organizations and well aware of the lofty principles and high ideals they both serve. What is more, this is the first time this item has been debated in the General Assembly. Of course, we would like also to express our deep appreciation to the Italian delegation for taking the initiative for the inscription of the item on the agenda, its allocation to a plenary meeting and its presentation here.

The United Nations and the Council of Europe share many common goals, and therefore closer cooperation and coordination between them would render both more vital players on crucial issues such as human rights and basic freedoms. The fields of cooperation between the two are too numerous to repeat. The draft resolution introduced by the representative of Italy, of which Cyprus is a sponsor, refers to the most striking examples of cooperation, such as issues of international law, development, women's rights, racism and intolerance, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and refugees — the list goes on.

There is no doubt in our minds that both organizations will be benefited by this cooperation, especially in the areas of common endeavours, with mankind the ultimate main beneficiary. We therefore wholeheartedly support this cooperation.

Cyprus, over the years of its membership in the Council of Europe, has witnessed the Council's constructive contribution to human rights and international law. In the case of the problem of Cyprus, the role of the Council of Europe has been very constructive. In this regard, we take the opportunity to express to Mr. Schwimmer, the Secretary General of the Council, and the distinguished European parliamentarians present today, our deep appreciation.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): Austria highly welcomes this first General Assembly discussion on "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe," especially in the presence of the Secretary General of the Council, Mr. Walter Schwimmer, and the parliamentarians of the Council of Europe. The Austrian Government and people have been deeply committed to both global and regional organizations since the very beginning of our membership in 1955, 45 years ago.

Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter refers to the possibility of regional organizations sharing the burden of keeping peace. Consequently, there is ample opportunity for a division of labour between the United Nations and the Council of Europe, especially in the field of conflict prevention and settlement. It is now up to us, the Member States, to support the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and Secretary General Walter

Schwimmer in their efforts to intensify the dialogue and cooperation between the two organizations.

In this respect, Austria was pleased to note that an excellent meeting of the Secretary-General of the United Nations took place in Strasbourg on 3 October with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and representatives of the Council.

The Council of Europe is the central focus for the protection of human rights and democratic rights in Europe, and is committed, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan has rightly pointed out, to creating a culture of human rights throughout the European continent. Considering the goals of the United Nations and the Council, it is obvious that fields of cooperation abound: human rights, education, monitoring of elections, protection of children, gender equality, the fight against corruption — to just name a few.

A good recent example is the European Conference against Racism, held in Strasbourg, which will be an important contribution and input to the World Conference against racism to be held in South Africa next year. I would also like to emphasize the role of the Council as partner of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. The Council has demonstrated its determination to be an active member in the efforts of the international community to assist in solving a major humanitarian conflict.

Austria therefore fully supports a further intensification of the cooperation between the two organizations, and welcomes the idea of a Council of Europe presence in New York in the form of a liaison office. This would permit a continuous dialogue between our organizations. We are confident that our meeting today, in which we will adopt the first General Assembly resolution on this item, will be an important step towards intensified cooperation in the future.

Mr. Atkinson (United Kingdom): The delegation of France has already spoken on behalf of the European Union. My delegation fully endorses that statement and would like to make a few further points.

The United Kingdom welcomes the forthcoming adoption of the draft resolution; it usefully clarifies the areas in which the United Nations and the Council of Europe will continue to cooperate, and we should use this opportunity to focus on producing practical results.

When the Council of Europe commenced its annual visits to this General Assembly in 1997, through its sub-committee on relations with non-member countries, we found to our horror that our organization was neither recognized by the United Nations as a regional organization nor accorded a regular cooperation debate in this Assembly, unlike many of the other regional organizations. This was a particular surprise to us, because, as we have been reminded in this debate, the Council of Europe is the largest and the oldest of Europe's institutions, born, like the United Nations itself, out of the ashes of the last world war. It concerned us greatly, because of the valuable contributions which the Council of Europe has made and continues to make to the work of the United Nations.

Thus we are delighted that cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe is being debated in this Assembly today for the very first time. And so we pay tribute to the Italian presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for enabling it to take place, and to the untiring work of our Danish rapporteur, Hanne Severinsen.

The Brahimi report (A/55/305) has launched a new debate on the prevention of conflict. As I hope is no longer disputed, the best prevention of conflict is the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. There are few, if any, examples of a democracy in conflict with another democracy, and it is here that we believe the Council of Europe can make a major contribution to the work of the United Nations.

Since 1989 — over the past 12 years — the number of member States of the Council of Europe has increased from 23 to 41, and possibly it will be 45 next year. To accede to the Council of Europe a country must be committed to achieving our standards of democracy, to be subjected to the detailed scrutiny of its commitments and to accept the jurisdiction of our European Court of Human Rights. It is this unique experience of the working of our institutions and instruments and of our monitoring procedures which contributes to the prevention of conflict in Europe and which we believe can contribute much more to the work of the United Nations.

There are four specific examples of the contribution the Council of Europe makes to the work of the United Nations to which I wish to draw the attention of the Assembly.

First, the important work of our North-South Centre in Lisbon, which raises awareness in Europe to the problems of poverty and depravation throughout the world.

Secondly, the solution we believe we have produced to one of the final status issues to be resolved in the Middle East peace process — that of the three and a quarter million displaced Palestine refugees, over one million of whom live in the 59 camps run by the United Nations through its Relief and Works Agency. We believe that the Council of Europe's 1998 report on this issue offers a practical solution to this problem.

Thirdly, in the area of conflict prevention, the Council of Europe has delivered practical assistance to and support for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), most recently in providing a mission to observe the Kosovo regional elections. It has also cooperated with the United Nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina in providing human rights training to the judiciary and police and it contributes to the Stability Pact programme for South-Eastern Europe.

Fourthly, the forthcoming Council of Europe contribution to next year's United Nations Year of the Volunteer, which our Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee is currently preparing.

May I, in conclusion, draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is composed of national delegations who are members of our national Parliaments and it is this parliamentary dimension to the work of our organization which we believe has contributed to the relative peace and expanding democracy and human rights in Europe over the past fifty years. This parliamentary dimension, which we recommend, should now be introduced into the work of the United Nations as has been proposed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). We believe that practical politicians can find new solutions when Governments have reached deadlock. And that is the clear message that I hope will result from this first historic debate on cooperation between our two organizations today.

Mr. Abelian (Armenia): I should like to begin by expressing our appreciation to the Italian delegation for introducing the draft resolution on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe, contained in document A/55/L.8, which my delegation has joined in sponsoring.

May I also welcome the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Schwimmer, and the delegation from the Council's Parliamentary Assembly.

The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 as the first political institution in Europe. The main aims of the organization are to achieve greater unity between its member States through cooperation in all fields, except military, and on the basis of shared values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Democracy, human rights, respect for the individual, security and stability and a Europe free from conflict are not in themselves new ideas. Born in Europe, they have achieved universal relevance and recognition beyond the borders of Europe itself. What is new, however, is that one can adopt and advocate these values through appropriate institutional arrangements. It is in that sense that the Council of Europe is both a means to an end, as well as a worthwhile objective in itself.

The end of the cold war era gave the countries of Central and Eastern Europe an historic opportunity to return to European values and ideals, to restore to democratic institutions the mechanisms needed to create the political dimension that would allow them to engage in dialogue, partnership and cooperation with all other existing democracies.

It should be noted that most of those countries did not miss this unique opportunity and succeeded in restoring democracy, which eventually made possible their accession to the Council of Europe.

In this context, we welcome the activities of the Council aimed at the support of the democratic processes in countries in transition and at providing all possible opportunities for greater involvement in European structures and affairs.

Armenia was among the countries that did not miss the opportunity. It did not undertake its own democratization process simply in order to join the Council. It does recognize, however, that, having started the process of reform, the need to consolidate its achievements, as well as the need to go further in a firm and irrevocable manner, requires that it seek to integrate itself into the institutional framework — that is, the Council. The Council is a model and an

inspiration as well as the guarantor of the legitimacy of our own undertakings on the road to democratization.

Over the past few years, we have attempted to maintain a steady course in preparing for our membership. In doing so, we have continued to look at the way in which those ahead of us have attempted to embody the values of the Council of Europe by making those values significant in the conduct of their own affairs.

In 1996, we applied to join the Council of Europe and earlier this year, on 29 June, at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council, Armenia's full membership was recommended to the Committee of Ministers, stating that Armenia is moving towards a democratic pluralist society in which human rights and the rule of law are respected and, in accordance with Article 4 of the Statute of the Council of Europe, is able and willing to pursue democratic reforms. The final decision is to be taken by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in one of its upcoming meetings.

We understand that there is a common view among members of the Council to invite Armenia and Azerbaijan together to join the Council. At the same time, there are some concerns and reservations on the part of several members with regard to Azerbaijan's accession to the Council following its parliamentary elections. Furthermore, there are calls by member States to make Azerbaijan's accession altogether contingent upon its handling of elections.

Armenia's support for the joint accession of Armenia and Azerbaijan notwithstanding, we are not likely to support any further linkage between the two countries beyond the date of Azerbaijan's parliamentary elections.

Given our past disappointing experience in this connection, we have serious concerns about further delays in Armenia's full membership. We would urge member States to de-link the two countries' membership issue and judge each country's qualification for membership on its own merits. We are not reluctant to admit that the South Caucasus is a subregion whose democratic restructuring is not yet fully complete. A stable and democratic South Caucasus is a work in progress. As in all work in progress its promise must not ignore the fragility of its emerging equilibrium. We recognize and welcome the constructive role that the Council of Europe can, and must, play to consolidate this equilibrium, but it must not, perhaps inadvertently, by uneven or inconsistent application of its principles, exacerbate existing imbalances.

Cooperation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations started in 1951 with the Agreement between the Council of Europe and the Secretariat of the United Nations, which was updated in 1971. The Council provides the framework and the appropriate mechanism for protecting, promoting and implementing human rights and we acknowledge the contribution of the Council of Europe to the protection and the strengthening of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law on the European continent, including its activities against racism and intolerance, the promotion of gender equality, social development and a common cultural heritage.

In recent years, the Council of Europe has been involved in renewed cooperation with the United Nations, mainly in relation to crisis situations in Europe. In 1993, the United Nations Office in Geneva, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe established the practice of holding tripartite high-level meetings to exchange information and to promote coordination of their activities in areas of common concern.

At the dawn of the new century it is very timely for the General Assembly to examine ways and means of further developing the already advanced cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution 44/6, of 17 October 1989, I now call on the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Walter Schwimmer.

Mr. Schwimmer (Council of Europe): It is a great honour and privilege for me to be the first Secretary General of the Council of Europe to address the United Nations General Assembly. Today's debate on cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe marks a breakthrough in the relations between our institutions. This is the occasion, I am convinced, to discuss how the Council of Europe can even better contribute concretely and specifically to the work of the United Nations. In other words, how can we increase our added value?

My sincere thanks go to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for having originally proposed this debate, and to Italy, currently chairing our Committee of Ministers, for having taken up the suggestion and having introduced the draft resolution before the Assembly. Important impetus was also provided by the permanent representative of Finland in Strasbourg.

This debate has already given an impressive and convincing description of what the Council of Europe stands for. Our Organization, which currently consists of 41 member States, first and foremost represents the Europe of shared values. The organization embodies the shared commitment of 800 million Europeans to human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Sharing our values are the Council's non-European observer States — Canada, Japan, Mexico and the United States. We also value our cooperation with the Holy See, which enjoys a similar status.

Since the end of the cold war the Council of Europe has become a truly pan-European organization, with 17 new members having been admitted in the past decade. Our achievements include, notably, over 170 multilateral conventions, several of which are also open to non-member States. Next month we shall celebrate in Rome the fiftieth anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights, with its unique protection mechanism, which enables individuals to obtain binding court decisions on their complaints against member States.

Our increase in membership has been accompanied by a growing emphasis on cooperation and assistance programmes to strengthen democratic stability. In brief, through its standard-setting and democracy-building activities, the Council of Europe is making a major contribution to long-term conflict prevention in Europe. I do not need to convince the Assembly that such conflict prevention is at infinitely lower cost than conflict resolution. If other organizations are sometimes called upon to act as fire brigades, the Council of Europe can be considered as the fire prevention system. In addition, in recent times the Council of Europe has increasingly become involved in what the United Nations Brahimi report (A/55/305) refers to as peace-building, notably in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, and to some extent in Chechnya.

In which areas do the Council of Europe and the United Nations already cooperate? Let me give but a few examples. Together with the United Nations, we are actively engaged in fighting racism, xenophobia and intolerance. Last week, we organized the European Conference against racism and intolerance in preparation for next year's United Nations World Conference in South Africa. Close cooperation exists with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who was present for the entire Conference in Strasbourg last week, as well as with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The Council of Europe made a significant contribution to the special sessions of the General Assembly this year on women and social development. We also intend to actively contribute to the forthcoming special session on the follow-up to the World Summit for Children.

Our Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, which is the political assembly of local and regional politicians from our member countries, is assisting in the preparation for this General Assembly of a world charter of local self-government.

A clear expression of the Council of Europe's sharing the concern of the United Nations for democracy and human rights worldwide is its North-South Centre in Lisbon, which seeks to raise public awareness in Europe on global interdependence issues and to promote human rights, pluralist democracy and social cohesion in other parts of the world.

We cooperate on the ground in Bosnia and Herzegovina; in Kosovo we actively contribute to the work of the United Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and, at UNMIK's request, we have assumed responsibility for the observation of the electoral process.

The President returned to the Chair.

As Secretary-General Kofi Annan — who made a very valuable visit to the Council of Europe two weeks ago — was also in a position to appreciate, many combined efforts are already under way. However, I am convinced that those efforts could be intensified even more, and that they should be made more politically evident. Let me illustrate this by referring to some of our most pressing concerns at the moment.

Recent developments in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, like the fall of the Berlin Wall, herald the

beginning of a new era in European politics. The Council of Europe has therefore warmly welcomed the courageous choice by the Serbian people in favour of democracy. The Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and I have already invited the new President, Mr. Kostunica, to come to Strasbourg for high-level meetings at the beginning of November. I am very proud that he has accepted.

A Council of Europe delegation is at present in Belgrade to discuss future relations and possible assistance programmes with the new leadership. I am convinced, however, that the transition in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will be completed only when Mr. Milosević, the Butcher of the Balkans, is brought to justice. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan told the General Assembly last year, the key to deterring crimes against humanity lies in the battle against the impunity of the perpetrators.

While there are thus high hopes and expectations with regard to the Balkans, the fatally flawed elections in Belarus last Sunday showed that democracy has not yet won everywhere in Europe.

The situation in Chechnya, which is very serious, remains of particular concern. The Council of Europe has repeatedly expressed its grave concern about human rights violations there. A recent hearing of the Russian State Duma, which I was able to attend, made it clear that much remains to be done. The Council of Europe's most tangible contribution has been its assistance in the setting up of the office of the Special Representative of the Russian President for Human Rights in Chechnya, Mr. Vladimir Kalamanov. Although the office has made an encouraging start, the test of its success will be the effective follow-up it can give to the already over 4,000 complaints brought by the people of the region.

I also wish once more to express my concern about the fate of the more than 18,000 persons reported missing since the conflict began and the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons who live under very difficult circumstances. It is my sincere hope that the competent agencies of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations will soon be able to become fully operational in Chechnya.

Let me finally mention our neighbouring region, the Middle East, which has been the scene of such horrific events in recent days. In particular, the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, with which the Israeli Knesset has enjoyed observer status since 1957, has been very active in efforts to promote dialogue between the parties. It was, in fact, one of the first forums to bring Israeli legislators and Palestinian representatives together. We stand ready to make any contribution that may be deemed useful to facilitate the continuation of that dialogue following this week's agreement at Sharm el-Sheikh.

I opened my statement by asking how the Council of Europe could contribute even better to the work of the United Nations. I believe that recognition of the Council of Europe as a regional organization within the meaning of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter would be an important step forward. First, this would be a political acknowledgement of the contribution the organization makes to conflict prevention and peace-building in Europe. It would, furthermore, enhance the Council of Europe's role as a model for other continents in the fields of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Existing cooperation on the ground in areas such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo would obtain a clearer political mandate. Finally, it would add increased relevance to what I hope will be an annual discussion in the General Assembly about our contribution to the work of the United Nations.

In conclusion, let me thank all delegations that contributed to this important debate, and all delegations that associated themselves with the French statement on behalf of the European Union. Special hanks to go the delegations of our applicant countries — Armenia, Azerbaijan and Monaco — for their statements.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. We shall now proceed to the consideration of draft resolution A/55/L.8.

Before the Assembly proceeds to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, since its introduction, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/55/L.8: Azerbaijan, Canada, Japan, Monaco and the United States of America.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.8?

Draft resolution A/55/L.8 was adopted (resolution 55/3).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 170?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 181

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

The President: In accordance with the decision taken at its 37th plenary meeting, held on 19 October 2000, the General Assembly will now consider agenda item 181.

Mr. Bossière (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

Let me begin by welcoming the fact that the recent signing of the agreement governing relations between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons provides an opportunity for the General Assembly, for the first time, to take note in plenary meeting of the considerable progress towards the elimination of chemical weapons that has been made since the 1993 conclusion of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

I cannot overemphasize the importance that the European Union attaches to the Convention. The Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is one of the international community's outstanding steps forward in the sphere of disarmament and non-proliferation: for the first time, a treaty has created an international organization effectively to verify the elimination, within a specific timeframe, of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

The Convention's large number of States parties — 140 to date — and the many ratifications over the past year prove the international community's continued support for that instrument, and are particularly encouraging for disarmament. Thus, several continents, including Europe, are already fully covered by the provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The European Union takes this opportunity to call upon States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons as soon as possible, and reaffirms its support for efforts to attain universal adherence.

Strengthening the authority of the Treaty requires also that all States parties fulfil their obligations. Cooperation between States parties and the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has enabled that organization to make great progress in implementing the Convention. All States parties have submitted their initial declarations, and a strict and effective inspection system has been successfully put in place to verify the accuracy of those declarations. These accomplishments have increased transparency and have made it possible to create a climate of greater trust with respect to all matters related to chemical weapons.

The European Union wishes also to recall the importance it attaches to the destruction by chemical-weapon States of all their stockpiles of such weapons as soon as possible, and within the timeframe set out in the Convention. The European Union does not underestimate the difficulties faced by some States in allocating the resources necessary for the destruction of their chemical weapons. It has therefore decided, in the framework of its Joint Action of 17 December 1999, to allocate 5.9 million euros to help in the construction of a chemical weapons destruction plant in Russia. The European Union wishes nonetheless to stress that, by the terms of the Convention, responsibility, including financial responsibility, for the destruction of chemical-weapons stockpiles lies solely with the States possessing such stockpiles.

It seems particularly appropriate for the General Assembly to acknowledge and support the efforts made by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the area of disarmament. These efforts represent the best assurance we have that the twenty-first century will be free from the scourge of chemical weapons. In the shorter term, we hope also that the progress that has been made in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention will help give impetus to the negotiations currently under way in

Geneva on an effective protocol for strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention. The conclusion of these negotiations before the end of 2001, pursuant to the decision taken in 1996 by the parties to the negotiations, will contribute usefully to supplementing and strengthening the achievements of the Chemical Weapons Convention in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The President: I call on the representative of Egypt on a point of order.

Mr. Darwish (Egypt): My delegation has asked for the floor on a point of order to comment on certain procedural matters pertaining to agenda item 8 and to agenda item 181, which is entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons".

General Assembly document A/55/495 was distributed on 18 October 2000, and a decision was taken by the Assembly, during the morning of 19 October, to waive the seven-day rule. That does not give delegations ample time to consult with their capitals on such matters, taking into account the fact that the seven-day rule is rarely waived and that this is done only when the matters under consideration are urgent.

The 24-hour rule also was waived with respect to the decision to allow the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to speak from the rostrum. It is worth noting also that the First Committee was in session yesterday morning and that, accordingly, experts from that Committee could not attend the General Assembly plenary.

It is the wish of my delegation that the practice I have just described not constitute a precedent in future.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on a point of order.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) *(spoke in Arabic)*: The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic has asked to speak on a point of order to express its view on the procedure that was followed in dealing with item 181 on "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons".

In this respect, my delegation wishes to clarify the following.

First, the letter contained in document A/55/495 was circulated yesterday, and the decision was also made yesterday. That document reached my delegation only this morning. I believe that the waiver of the seven-day rule for reasons of urgency, and the waiver of the 24-hour rule in order to allow the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to make a statement from the rostrum, are important issues. Sufficient time should have been given to the members to thoroughly consider this matter and prepare their responses.

Secondly, my delegation wonders about the reasons for the use of these waivers, in particular as the situation is not related to urgent matters that affect international peace and security. We believe that it would have been instructive and useful in this case to abide by the procedures and regulations of the General Assembly.

Thirdly, my delegation hopes that this will not constitute a precedent in the work of the General Assembly, in particular in relation to the OPCW and to the statement by its Director-General from the rostrum of the General Assembly.

The President: The statements made by the representatives of Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic will be reflected in the record of this meeting.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): I should like to seize this opportunity to express my great appreciation to the Member States for their positive response to the request by my Government for the inclusion in the agenda of an additional item 181, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons", and for allowing an oral debate to take place today.

My country has a special relationship with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). It is for this reason that I am taking the floor after the representative of France, who spoke on behalf of the European Union, associated countries and other countries.

Of course, we fully associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of France. We also support the draft resolution on the subject of chemical weapons that is under consideration in the First Committee. The Netherlands is proud and very

pleased to be the host country of the OPCW. We felt that it was our duty as host country to propose that the General Assembly be given the opportunity to react to the important event that occurred last Tuesday, 17 October. This was the signing of the Relationship Agreement between the United Nations and the OPCW, a further milestone in the short history of the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and Their Destruction. It may be recalled that the Convention entered into force only in 1997 and that since that date the organization and its State parties have made significant progress towards the abolition of a whole category of weapons of mass destruction, the destruction of existing stocks and the elimination of facilities for the production of chemical weapons. Thus, the OPCW contributes to eliminating real threats to international, as well as regional, peace and security.

With the creation of an effective verification regime, the Convention has set an important precedent in confidence-building and disarmament. We are convinced that the example set by the OPCW will continue to inspire States currently negotiating a similar regime to eliminate the threat of biological weapons. The Netherlands will do its part to help bring these negotiations to a successful conclusion before the end of 2001. To give the new organization for the prohibition of biological weapons a head start, we shall make sure that it benefits fully from the experience gained from working with its sister organization, the OPCW.

Mr. Snyder (United States of America): My delegation would like to thank Director-General Bustani for joining us today. We would also like to take this opportunity to applaud the conclusion of the Relationship Agreement between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). This Agreement marks the beginning of a closer working relationship between these two important organizations.

We are pleased to note that the Relationship Agreement also has practical benefits. One such benefit is the further facilitation of the work and travel of OPCW inspectors. This will assist OPCW inspectors in carrying out inspections expeditiously and efficiently.

Finally, we would like to express our appreciation to the legal offices of both the United Nations Secretariat and the OPCW Technical Secretariat for their hard work in helping to bring this Agreement to completion.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): After a long period of painstaking negotiation, the Chemical Weapons Convention — a unique multilateral disarmament treaty to eliminate an entire class of weapons of mass destruction — entered into force in 1997. The Chemical Weapons Convention, with 140 States parties on board, now enjoys a great deal of international support, legitimacy and relevance. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), a newly established independent, autonomous international organization, has so far striven to achieve the objectives and purposes of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and to ensure the full implementation of its provisions.

Since its establishment, OPCW has conducted its activities, as provided for under the Convention, in an efficient manner, verifying the compliance of the States parties with their obligations, and, as an international forum, facilitating consultations and cooperation among the States parties. Since its ratification of the Convention, the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the context of its long-standing commitment to the realization of the Convention, and as the most recent victim of these horrific weapons, has spared no effort to support the Convention and the implementation activities of the OPCW.

The tireless efforts and activities of the Director-General of the OPCW, Ambassador Bustani, and his staff in the course of the implementation of the Convention deserve our appreciation and support. We therefore express our satisfaction with the inclusion of the item on cooperation between the United Nations and the OPCW on the agenda of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly and welcome the presence of Director-General Bustani of the OPCW here today.

The signature at this important juncture of the Relationship Agreement between the two organizations, in accordance with the Convention, is, in our view, a major step towards facilitating the implementation of the Convention. The Islamic Republic of Iran was actively involved in the negotiations on this Agreement. Following intensive discussions within the OPCW and with the constructive

involvement of the United Nations Secretariat, the differences over some aspects of the Agreement were ultimately resolved in a spirit of cooperation and understanding. We are pleased that this Agreement has now been signed by the two organizations and is well placed for implementation.

The common objective of the two organizations — to achieve effective progress towards general and complete disarmament — will be widely promoted through the consolidation of their relationship. In this regard, securing universality, as one of the basic pillars upon which the Convention was founded, is a necessity. In the Middle East region in particular, there is still much to be done to secure the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This will require the two organizations to utilize their available means of cooperation to guarantee universal adherence to the Convention.

Mr. Xu Xiaodi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I should like, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, to welcome the inclusion on the agenda of the current session the item regarding the cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Since the Chemical Weapons Convention came into effect more than three years ago, progress has been steady in the implementation of the Convention. The efforts made by the Secretariat of the OPCW, under the leadership of the Director-General, Mr. Bustani, have created an auspicious beginning for achieving a comprehensive ban on and the elimination of chemical weapons. The universality of the Convention has been strengthened. There are now 140 States parties and 34 States signatories to the Convention. The majority of States parties have submitted their declarations, as stipulated in the Convention. Countries in possession of chemical weapons have destroyed large quantities of such weapons under the supervision of the OPCW. The OPCW has made more than 700 inspection visits to more than 30 States parties. Other work has also been properly undertaken.

We congratulate the OPCW on its accomplishments. We are eagerly waiting to hear the statement to be made today by Mr. Bustani, the Director-General of the OPCW.

The OPCW, an international organization in charge of the prohibition and destruction of a whole category of weapons of mass destruction, has been playing a very important role in promoting international peace and security. Cooperation between the United Nations and the OPCW is highly important. That cooperation will effectively promote the relationship between the United Nations and the OPCW, thus enabling the latter to play an even more significant role in the maintenance of international peace and security, the promotion of arms control and disarmament.

China has always promoted the comprehensive prohibition and destruction of all weapons of mass destruction, including all chemical weapons. The Convention laid the foundation of international law for the achievement of this goal. As one of the original States parties, China has faithfully and strictly implemented its obligations under the Convention; we will continue to make our best efforts for the achievement of all the goals and principles of the Convention.

Even though great progress has been made in implementing the Convention, it must be noted that there are still issues in its implementation that cannot be ignored. Some important countries in certain regions have not ratified the Convention. Certain countries have expressed their reservations on the Convention's important and substantive articles by adopting their own national legislation. Many issues are still left unresolved after the adoption of the Convention.

More attention must continue to be paid to the destruction and verification of abandoned chemical weapons. In accordance with the Convention, there should be comprehensive cooperation between countries in the chemicals trade and in exchanges of chemical technologies. We would like to take this opportunity to appeal to those countries that have not yet signed or ratified the Convention to do so at an early date. We also hope that all of the Member States will completely and faithfully implement their obligations under the Convention in order to achieve fully its goals.

Mr. Westdal (Canada): Canada is pleased that we all have a chance to discuss the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in this forum. This key, still young, treaty has already contributed much to global security.

In force only since 1997, the Convention will soon have gained the backing of 140 States, a highly significant achievement. Important gaps, nonetheless, remain, particularly in the Middle East, in Latin

America and in Africa. For Canada's part, in close cooperation with the Organization of American States, we have worked hard in Latin America and the Caribbean to promote universality. We strongly encourage all States to join.

The Convention, the first multilateral agreement to ban an entire category of weapons, includes detailed provisions for verification. These involve national reporting or declarations concerning the use of chemicals covered by the Convention, along with on-site inspections by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Compliance in the submission of declarations is now excellent, and hundreds of inspections have taken place. The system works.

A unique feature of this Convention is that industry is directly involved, submitting the required information to Governments, obtaining authorizations for imports and exports and receiving inspections. Industry has thus become an essential partner in fulfilling the international community's determination that chemicals should be used only for peaceful, non-prohibited purposes. We recognize and much appreciate this practical commitment and support for our goal.

An important obligation of the Convention is the destruction of chemical weapon stockpiles by former possessor States. We welcome the progress already made, and we urge all such States parties to meet the deadline specified in the Convention. There will be much good reason to rejoice when such stockpiles — surely abuses of human genius and industry — are things of the past.

Canada is very supportive of the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons under the leadership of Director-General Bustani. At the same time, we recognize that several key issues affecting the organization itself, and the fully effective implementation of the Convention, are yet to be resolved. We remain actively committed to the achievement of consensus solutions.

Finally, today's debate is particularly timely, given the signature earlier this week of the welcomed Relationship Agreement between the OPCW and the United Nations. We look forward to an annual opportunity to discuss this vital Convention. But, much more, we look forward to — and will work hard to hasten — the happy day of its universality.

Ms. Assumpçao-Pereira (Brazil) *(spoke in Spanish)*: We are very gratified to speak in the discussion on the new agenda item, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)", introduced on the initiative of the delegation of the Netherlands.

Two days ago, the Southern Common Market countries and Bolivia and Chile spoke in the plenary meeting of the First Committee on the item entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction". Our countries highlighted the progress made in implementing this key instrument for disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which has already been ratified or acceded to by 140 States. We welcome the fraternal countries of Mozambique, Gabon and Jamaica among the newest members of the organization. This serves to bolster the objective of giving the Convention and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons the desirable breadth and universality.

Brazil, which played a constructive part in the negotiations on the Relationship Agreement between OPCW and the United Nations, is very gratified by the signing of the document on 17 October. In the context of the objectives of peace, security and development, as articulated in the Charter of this universal Organization, the Relationship Agreement between OPCW and the United Nations represents the culmination of a process of establishing and consolidating the non-proliferation and disarmament regime for chemical weapons, developed under the OPCW's responsibility.

The Agreement sets out to coordinate efforts and to harmonize the activities and objectives of the two organizations. This strengthens them and expands their ability to act for the benefit of the international community.

Let us not forget that the OPCW is the product of the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Now, with no diminution of its autonomous, distinct character, it is beginning to operate as a branch of the United Nations system. Thus in the matter of international peace and security the United Nations now has adequate means — recognized as impartial and efficient — to act with increasing legitimacy to

promote the disarmament and non-proliferation regime in this important sector of weapons of mass destruction — chemical weapons. With regard to cooperation for development, the cooperation between the two bodies offers promising prospects for the chemical industry and for the use of scientific and technical knowledge for peaceful purposes.

On his recent visit to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the President of Brazil, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, highlighted the fact that at the first OPCW conference Brazil had volunteered one of its most talented diplomats to serve as the OPCW's first Director-General. The President said that Brazil understood that the renewal of the term of office of Ambassador José Maurício Bustani as the head of the OPCW was also a sign of the recognition of the constructive role played by Brazil in addressing international security issues.

The Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW are examples of the high level of understanding attained by the international community. But much remains to be done if we are to achieve by 2007 the objective of destroying all existing chemical arsenals throughout the world. Therefore, in addition to cooperation in the area of science and technology, we advocate using the machinery of the Convention to promote the legitimacy of international controls over sensitive chemical substances. Failure to do so would be to undermine this model disarmament and non-proliferation instrument. We are convinced that the signing of the relationship agreement between the OPCW and the United Nations will enable us to make headway in this direction.

Mr. Sood (India): India welcomes the conclusion of the relationship agreement between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We are confident that it will further facilitate the effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which has now been in force for almost three and a half years.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is a unique disarmament agreement. In our view, it is unique because it is a multilaterally negotiated disarmament agreement, the first of its kind, that is comprehensive in its scope, universal in its applicability, non-discriminatory in character and backed by an international verification system that is the first of its kind in both detail and complexity.

We are aware that the negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention took many years, and that the negotiations themselves — which lasted for nearly 10 years — were preceded by extensive preparations. India participated actively in the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. We were active participants in the Preparatory Commission and were among the original signatories. We were an original State party and also had the privilege to serve as the first Chairman of the Executive Council when the Convention entered into force.

Of the nearly 700 inspections that have been carried out, more than 40 have been conducted in India by the Technical Secretariat since the Convention's entry into force. They have been conducted in a professional manner. The smooth conduct of such inspections — both those related to chemical weapons and those related to industry — is essential for enhancing confidence in the verification regime of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The destruction of chemical weapons and the provision of chemical weapons destruction facilities, the principal objective of the Convention, are proceeding well. Implementation of industry verification has been moving smoothly now that most of the significant countries have submitted their industry declarations. Universality has improved; there are now 140 States parties to the Convention.

Yet there remain other areas of concern. Achieving a greater degree of universality of States parties is one area with which all States parties are concerned. To us, given that we are also engaged in negotiations on a protocol relating to the Biological Weapons Convention, another area of concern is the somewhat tardy implementation of article XI of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is absolutely essential that such treaties, which are unique, for the reasons I have given, be implemented fully and completely, in order to ensure that they can serve as models; we have dealt with one category of weapons of mass destruction, so such treaties can be a model for dealing effectively with all other categories of weapons of mass destruction.

Ms. Martinic (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I begin by welcoming the presence of Ambassador Bustani, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Argentina attaches particular importance to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. In the context of this policy, we were an active participant in the negotiations on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. An example of our stance was the Mendoza Declaration, adopted in 1991, by which Argentina, Brazil and Chile committed themselves, before the conclusion of the negotiations, to the complete prohibition of chemical weapons. Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay and Ecuador have since associated themselves with that Declaration.

Therefore, Argentina salutes the work of the OPCW and of its Director-General, Ambassador Bustani. We welcome the signing of the agreement between the United Nations and the OPCW. We have no doubt that we are moving in the right direction to rid the world of these horrendous weapons.

The President: In accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 37th plenary meeting yesterday, 19 October 2000, I now give the floor to the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Mr. José Bustani.

Mr. Bustani (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons): I am pleased to address the General Assembly on this special occasion, adding my voice as Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to the hundreds of others that are shaping the global agenda at the dawn of a new millennium. It is a special responsibility that requires me to speak from the heart.

I would like to thank the delegation of the Netherlands, the host country of the OPCW, for its timely initiative to request the inclusion of this additional item on the agenda of this session of the General Assembly.

I am honoured, Mr. President, to speak to the United Nations on behalf of the OPCW in your presence, given Finland's unwavering support for the work of the Organization. I would like, in particular, to acknowledge the active contribution of the former President of Finland, Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, to the quest for the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Numerous challenges mentioned in the United Nations Millennium Declaration demand not simply attention, but united, prompt and decisive action on the part of the leaders of all nations, be they large or small. Addressing these challenges also requires wisdom and vision on the part of those whom humankind has entrusted with the international coordination of such efforts. Only the dedicated symbiosis of the political will of States with the commitment and dedication of international institutions can bring about the successful resolution of these burning problems.

The unprecedented gathering of world leaders in New York last month demonstrated that the age of confusion and doubt about the role and the functions of multilateral mechanisms may be drawing to a close. The turn of the millennium regenerated hope for a new era of togetherness in the international community. The world's rapidly growing interdependence, the increased transparency of national boundaries, the information revolution, a shared perception of the universality of environmental concerns, and other factors, have combined to produce the reality and the concept of globalization. While the benefits of globalization must be shared more equally, globalization itself is also evidence that it is simply no longer possible for some matters to be dealt with by individual States or groups of States. We have entered the millennium of multilateral solutions.

One area in which the world has to speak with one voice is international security. The cold war drew to a close more than a decade ago. Yet it would be unimaginable to proclaim that the threat to world peace is now a thing of the past. In the broad spectrum of other challenges, such as global epidemics, regional conflicts, nationalist hatred, religious violence and terrorism, one of the very real dangers to human survival still emanates from the existence of weapons of mass destruction.

In spite of a number of well-known setbacks, humankind can still be proud of its impressive record of achievement in curbing this danger. The total number of nuclear weapons is at its lowest level in 20 years. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which imposed real limitations on the proliferation and modernization of nuclear weapons, has been concluded. Efforts to create an efficient verification regime for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention are in their final stages, although their end result is still uncertain.

Nuclear weapons have traditionally dominated the disarmament agenda. Moreover, the past decade has seen an increased awareness of the dangers of biological warfare. Yet I would submit that, short of an Armageddon scenario, the threat to human life from chemical weapons is still probably the greatest. This is because, in a world which is no longer hostage to super-Power confrontation, chemical weapons, compared to nuclear and biological weapons, remain the most usable weapon of mass destruction and can be produced with relative ease and at a relatively low cost.

Nevertheless, I am proud to state that, in the field of chemical disarmament, multilateral efforts have — quietly but effectively — already made a real difference and are continuing to do so. Now that the OPCW will regularly report to the General Assembly, more will be known about our contribution to the cause of global disarmament and about the positive example which the OPCW provides for other present and future legal instruments and verification regimes.

The fact that the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force on 29 April 1997 and has been successfully implemented for three and a half years is a remarkable achievement. Never before has humankind embarked on such an ambitious undertaking in the field of disarmament, aiming not just at reductions, restrictions, confidence-building and non-proliferation, but at the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. The creation of the OPCW in the beautiful city of The Hague, a well-established and growing international centre of admirable reputation, and of National Authorities in its member States to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Convention — both nationally and internationally — is a unique multilateral disarmament experiment, an experiment which has so far been a complete success.

The degree of global trust and confidence in the Chemical Weapons Convention and in the OPCW is best illustrated by the rapid and continuing increase in its membership. The OPCW has grown from 87 States parties upon entering into force to 139 today. On 1 November, Yemen will become the 140th State party, following recent similar actions taken by Gabon, Jamaica and Kiribati during the Millennium Assembly. A more than 60-per-cent increase in membership in three and a half years is without precedent in the history of verifiable disarmament instruments. The trust and confidence which the international community has placed in us must and will be honoured.

Historically speaking, three and a half years are a short period. Yet in business terms, they mark the threshold at which a sound undertaking must begin to demonstrate its viability. Patience is undeniably a virtue in international relations, yet patience should not be confused with inaction. We must be patient in waiting for results. However, we must be impatient when it comes to taking action.

The OPCW already has a lot to show for its three and a half years because of its forceful and impatient resolve to achieve what it was established to achieve. One half of the 61 chemical-weapons production plants declared to the organization by 11 States parties have been either destroyed or converted for peaceful purposes. Seven per cent of the world's declared stockpile of 70,000 tonnes of chemical agents and 15 per cent of the 8.4 million chemical munitions covered by the Convention have also been destroyed. All declared chemical weapons have been inventoried and all declared chemical-weapons production facilities have been inactivated. All are subject to a verification regime of unprecedented stringency. A total of 850 inspections have taken place in 44 States parties since April 1997, including 300 inspections at civilian chemical plants, to ensure that they engage only in non-chemical-weapons-related activities. These inspections are continuing as I speak. Following the submission of the United States industry declaration in the first half of this year, the United States chemical industry is now subject to an intensive industry inspection schedule which is proceeding extremely well and has met the full support of chemical manufacturers and of the United States National Authority. For an organization with a little more than 500 staff members from 66 countries, including 200 inspectors, and which operates on an annual budget of only $55 million, these are impressive results.

At the same time, it would be inappropriate to use the rostrum of the General Assembly to talk only of the OPCW's successes. It is also my responsibility as the Director-General of the OPCW to inform the Assembly of significant challenges and obstacles to the effective and timely implementation of its mandate.

The immediate raison d'être of the OPCW is the worldwide elimination of existing stockpiles of chemical weapons and the prevention of their re-emergence anywhere. This objective will be realized only when all chemical weapons currently in existence

have been verified as destroyed and when all countries have joined the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The biggest challenge to the Convention's credibility comes today from the difficulties experienced by the Russian Federation in its attempts to destroy, in accordance with the Convention's timetables, its gigantic chemical weapons legacy inherited from the former Soviet Union. A significant delay in the destruction of the world's largest arsenal of chemical weapons may call into question the credibility of the Convention and could undermine the entire effort to rid the planet of these horrific weapons. Russia has already requested and received the approval of the OPCW Conference of the States Parties for a delay in the destruction of 1 per cent of its chemical weapons, which was originally due to be completed by 29 April this year. Even though the Russian Federation has already started destroying specialized components for chemical weapons, the actual destruction of chemical agents is scheduled to begin, at the earliest, in the first half of next year. The first and so far only full-scale chemical-weapons destruction facility in Russia will be commissioned even later, at the end of 2001.

While the magnitude of the problem facing the Russian Federation is truly immense, the reality highlights the need for further urgent and carefully coordinated action on the part of the Russian Government. International assistance, the need for which is beyond doubt, will be provided in sufficient quantity only in the context of an updated action plan yet to be drawn up by Russia itself. There is an urgent need for Russia to make fundamental policy decisions about how it intends to destroy its chemical weapons stockpile at minimum cost and with adequate measures in place to protect its people and its environment. I was heartened to learn that the Russian Government just a few days ago decided where to locate the seat of its National Authority — the body charged with the national implementation of the Convention. I am sure that the new National Authority — and its dedicated Director-General, Mr. Zinoviy Pak, charged with this responsibility by President Putin himself — will immediately take the much needed steps to breathe new life into the Russian chemical weapons destruction programme. I wish him every success and assure him of our full support.

I also welcome the steps already taken by a number of countries to assist Russia to destroy its chemical weapons. It is a fact, however, that the offers of such assistance fall far short of the need for them. This highlights another element which has been absent over the past several years, namely, a mechanism for the efficient coordination of international assistance to the Russian Federation. My proposal to establish a steering committee, which would regularly meet at the OPCW to monitor the progress of destruction and to identify gaps in the Russian resources which can only be filled from the outside, has been accepted by Russia, but has yet to be endorsed by donor countries. I am convinced that such a working steering committee would help to get things moving. It might also provide the international oversight which would allow the major donor — the United States — to persuade Congress to restore its funding to assist the destruction of chemical weapons in Russia.

However, destroying chemical weapons is only part of the solution to the problem which they pose. The Convention will not ultimately prevail until all States have formally committed themselves to it. A total of 34 signatory States still have to ratify the Convention, while an additional 19 countries have yet to accede to it. I keep asking myself the same question: if the reasons for delaying accession are not bureaucratic in nature, what are they? If these reasons are unrelated to chemical weapons, then we perhaps need to take a fresh look at the whole issue of accession.

Of the utmost concern is the situation in the Middle East, where Israel, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates and, of course, Iraq still remain outside the CWC. This concern is further reinforced by the spiralling cycle of violence which once again threatens the fragile peace process, with dangerous ramifications for regional stability and security and possibly for stability and security outside that region as well. After all, it was in the Middle East that chemical weapons were most recently used against both combatants and civilians. Heightened tensions in the region are calling into question the strategy which calls for a peace settlement before other elements contributing to such a settlement can even be discussed. What is wrong with taking a series of steps which would help to generate a climate of confidence amongst the key players in that region and which would demonstrate the genuine willingness of all parties to seek such a comprehensive settlement in parallel with peace negotiations?

Perhaps the time has come for all of the countries I have just mentioned to review the approaches which they have been pursuing with regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention and to the regional security agenda in general. Would the security situation in the Middle East improve if all actors were confident that the sword of Damocles of the possible use of chemical weapons was no longer hanging over their heads? Would not an initiative to accede to the Convention, together with other steps, create a political momentum in which movement on other elements of the security equation would be forthcoming?

The fact that Yemen, Jordan and Sudan have already elected to subscribe to precisely this view indicates that such an approach is not unrealistic in the Middle East environment. Much now depends on the next steps to be taken by other key players. What is needed for the gradual establishment in this region of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, as proposed by Egypt? Would not accession to the CWC be one of these steps, and a fundamental one at that? I wholeheartedly trust the wisdom of the Egyptian leadership on this issue.

By virtue of signing the Convention, Israel has already, under article I, entered into an obligation, inter alia, not to develop, produce or stockpile chemical weapons. What, then, is preventing it from ratifying the Convention and codifying its political commitment in legal terms?

Equally, much depends on the active contribution of the United States and of other major Powers and groups of States which have made the pursuit of a Middle East peace settlement one of the cornerstones of their foreign policy. I, for one, am ready to visit the region at an appropriate time to explore with the leadership the security issues I have mentioned.

I also express the hope that the leaders of the future Palestinian State will not hesitate to set the record straight from the outset, and will accede to not merely the Chemical Weapons Convention, but also other global arms control and disarmament treaties. A public statement of their position in this regard would contribute significantly to progress on this issue.

Another region of concern is Africa, where Angola, Somalia and Sao Tome and Principe remain outside the Convention, while Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia have yet to ratify the treaty. Africa's problems are many. However, Mozambique's decision to accede to the Convention earlier this year proves that these very real problems are not necessarily an impediment to acceding to the CWC. This is all the more true because the Convention does not confine itself to the issue of chemical weapons, but is also about promoting the peaceful uses of chemistry and helping to develop national expertise in pharmaceuticals, pesticides, fertilizers etc.

This brings me to a fundamental question. What incentive would a small country have to accede to the CWC when it has neither chemical weapons nor a chemical industry to speak of? The answers to this question are many. While a country may not have chemical weapons, it may, in particular in some regions, be subject to an attack with chemical weapons for as long as such weapons continue to exist. The Convention provides for assistance and protection to its States parties in the event of such attacks. What is perhaps even more important is that it also calls, in article XI, paragraph 2 (c) for States parties to:

> "Not maintain among themselves any restrictions ... which would restrict or impede trade and the development and promotion of scientific and technological knowledge in the field of chemistry for industrial, agricultural, research, medical, pharmaceutical, or other peaceful purposes".

In addition, the Convention provides for an expanding regime of restrictions in trade in chemicals applied by States parties towards those States which have chosen to stay out. The chemicals affected by this expanding regime have an increasingly broad range of commercial applications.

In the three and a half years of its existence, the CWC has undoubtedly proven its effectiveness as a confidence-building measure and has provided an unprecedented and much needed forum for States parties to address any concerns they may have about the compliance of other States parties. To this end, in addition to the verification activities of the OPCW itself, a number of States parties have already made use of the various mechanisms under article IX of the Convention in relation to consultation, cooperation and fact finding. As more States accede to the CWC, and as their chemical producers support it, the arguments

originally advanced for the continuing maintenance of restrictions on chemicals outside a credible, reliable international legal framework become increasingly redundant. Given this fact, the continuing existence of export controls by some States parties against others is hard to understand and very difficult to justify. I therefore urge those that still retain such controls to re-evaluate the need for them in the light of the factors I have just outlined, with a view to removing them as soon as possible. Moreover, restrictions other than those agreed by the international community as a whole could undermine the very legal pillars of any ongoing and future multilateral effort in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

While the CWC is sometimes perceived only as a disarmament and non-proliferation treaty, it has a third and fourth pillar of equal importance. Without them, the Convention would never have come into being. These two pillars are assistance in the area of protection against the use or threat of use of chemical weapons and international cooperation. The OPCW is vigorously pursuing international cooperation projects. With the participation of the Governments of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, we have just launched an innovative programme which targets scientists and engineers from developing countries. A major component of what we call the "OPCW Associate Programme" relates to the development of the skills and experience required to operate effectively in the context of the modern chemical industry.

The programme is supported by a number of chemical companies which are prepared to take in trainees and to involve them in their daily activities. In addition, intensive training in aspects of chemical manufacturing, plant safety, and the operations of chemical companies is provided at a university facility in the United Kingdom. As the programme proves its success, it could be expanded — and I plan to do that — to a regional level with individual projects for Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

The Convention has to remain flexible if it is to respond adequately to new threats and challenges. It already has a mechanism for responding to dangerous scientific and technological developments. It should also have the capacity to provide effective instruments to cope with human threats. I am talking here of chemical terrorism. This is a global threat, and any effective cure must also be global in nature. Even before universality is achieved, I believe that the Convention could be made much more effective by using its institutional and political framework to establish greatly enhanced links and cooperation between national anti-terrorism agencies and disaster relief organizations. These are, of course, suggestions which could be pursued further at the CWC Review Conference in 2002, hopefully with the participation of those countries that now still remain outside of the regime.

To be fully efficient and successful any international organization must be adequately funded. I mentioned earlier that the rapidly increasing membership of the OPCW testifies to the international community's trust and confidence that it has done a good job, and that it will continue to do so. The Organization must be adequately funded if it is to deliver on the increasing demands which are being made of it — be it in the areas of disarmament and verification, or in the field of international cooperation and assistance. Any significant widening of the gap between the financial resources and the Convention-mandated responsibilities of the OPCW could eventually damage the credibility of the Organization and might slow down, if not reverse, its momentum towards universality.

The relationship agreement between the OPCW and the United Nations, which was signed just a few days ago, opens up possibilities for broad-ranging cooperation. I intend to maximize these opportunities to the fullest extent possible. Only with the active assistance of the United Nations will the OPCW be able to implement its mandate with a maximum of efficiency and transparency. The Chemical Weapons Convention is the child of the United Nations. The United Nations is responsible — in loco parentis — for ensuring the well-being and success of its offspring. On behalf of the OPCW, I would also like to express my gratitude to the Office of Legal Affairs, and to Mr. Hans Corell, for the support, flexibility and understanding which the United Nations consistently demonstrated during these negotiations.

The OPCW has four mandates — disarmament, non-proliferation, assistance and protection, and international cooperation. It will fulfil all of these mandates when it achieves universality. I hope that, as chemical weapons are destroyed, States Parties will be prepared gradually to place on the promotion of the peaceful use of chemistry at least the same emphasis and resources as are required for the maintenance of a

reliable non-proliferation regime. From an organization created to rid the world of chemical weapons, the OPCW would ultimately evolve into an organization to promote the use of chemistry for the benefit of all nations. This would be an evolution reflecting the world's self-transformation, from confrontation and distrust into the productive pursuit of peace and prosperity for all humankind.

The President: I thank the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

We have heard the last speaker in the debate of this item for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Darwish (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation listened to the statement by Mr. Bustani, the Director-General of the OPCW, and the unilateral view of Egypt included in the statement.

We wish to clarify certain facts regarding those paragraphs of Mr. Bustani's statement that dealt with the situation in the Middle East.

First, it is clear that Egypt has not acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention — although we have adhered to its provisions — because of Israel's non-adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), despite the continuous demand for it to do so, the last time being during the Sixth Review Conference of the NPT.

Secondly, Egypt is ready to accede to the Convention when Israel accedes to the NPT.

Thirdly, Egypt's position, which is crystal clear, has been referred to in many forums. Since Mr. Bustani is aware of the facts, especially in the Middle East, he should have reflected this in an appropriate and balanced manner when addressing the Assembly, but unfortunately he has become accustomed to an incomplete view, which we saw last at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, when Egypt had to resort to the right of reply to set the record straight.

Fourthly, Egypt rejects chemical weapons as well as all weapons of mass destruction, as has been reflected clearly and at the highest level in President Mubarak's initiative to free the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction, I repeat, all weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, this has also been clearly reflected in the relevant resolutions put forward by Egypt in the First Committee.

In conclusion, we wish to confirm that genuine wisdom requires balanced and specific treatment of weapons of mass destruction and it is important to note that Mr. Bustani's statement has not shown that.

Mr. Hasan (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): First, there is a close relationship among disarmament conventions, especially those dealing with a single category like weapons of mass destruction. Disregarding this fact is indeed a reflection of selectivity and exacerbates the problems instead of solving them.

We would have liked Mr. Bustani's statement to have referred to this fact.

Secondly, the international community has given priority to weapons of mass destruction, foremost among which are nuclear weapons, whose elimination is demanded in documents of the tenth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. These related to disarmament in the nuclear field.

All Arab States have acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) while Israel has not. There is a veritable sword of Damocles hanging over the States of the region and over members of the international community. That sword takes the form of the nuclear weapons possessed by Israel, namely, over 200 nuclear bombs and their means of delivery, and its policy of expansion at the expense of Arab territory. That is the real danger.

It behoves the international community to seek to implement international agreements and United Nations resolutions regarding Israel's accession to the NPT, as well as Security Council resolution 487 (1981). The policy of double standards is indeed futile: those who seek real peace in the region must deal with existing problems and realities in a comprehensive manner.

Mr. Mekdad (Syria) (*spoke in Arabic*): We apologize for taking the floor at this late hour. However, my delegation was surprised to observe that

the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has chosen to twist facts and to disregard the real situation in the Middle East in his remarks about armaments and the elimination of chemical weapons. We do not know on what principles Mr. Bustani bases his comments when he attacks some countries' decisions regarding accession to the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Does Mr. Bustani not know that decisions of this nature are based on the current state of affairs in various regions? Does he not know that Israel is armed to the teeth with chemical and nuclear weapons and the most advanced aircraft and tanks? Mr. Bustani is misled. Indeed, he has gone in the wrong direction in his statement. The stark reality before the General Assembly is that Israel has limited itself to signing the Convention; it has not ratified it and has therefore not acceded to it.

Addressing the General Assembly is a responsibility that must be assumed sincerely by representatives of international organizations. We do not believe Mr. Bustani has taken that approach. His statement was merely a simplistic analysis of the overall political situation in the Middle East and was in no way a reflection of the actual facts nor of the positions of the States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. In fact, if his statement illustrates anything it is that Mr. Bustani is completely ignorant of the situation in the Middle East.

He has adopted a selective policy in making his statement. According to Mr. Bustani's assertions, 34 countries have not ratified the Convention, while 19 States have yet to accede to it. This raises questions in our minds and indicates that the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons should make additional efforts throughout the world, rather than focus on a single region. It is true that the situation in the Middle East is complex, but we should identify the source of the problem rather than address the situation in a suspicious way.

The one party responsible for dragging the Middle East into a spiral of violence is Israel. Mr. Bustani used silk gloves in describing the situation and Israel's position, although he knows quite well that Israel has not genuinely adopted any practical, political or legal measures with regard to the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. His statement does not differ from Israel's statements or the positions it has taken. His statement reflects a complete bias in favour of Israel's attitude. It does not behove an international official to mislead the international community in such a way.

The undeniable truth known to everyone is that Israel alone is responsible for the escalation of the arms race in the Middle East. Israel publicly refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In fact, it is the only country in the region that has, under flimsy pretexts, not acceded to the NPT — to say nothing of other important conventions.

It is the Arabs who need reassurance and security. Their land is under occupation, and Israeli armed forces threaten them with nuclear and chemical weapons and all sorts of internationally prohibited arms — weapons that Israel has used against Lebanon and Palestine, among other places. What the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons should do is to deal with the issues on the basis of facts, and not on the basis of its Director-General's misguided accusations levelled at the wrong parties in total disregard of his role. That role is to prohibit all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, starting with nuclear weapons.

Mr. Lancry (Israel): I would first like to begin my short statement by thanking the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons for his statement. Israel views the unique Chemical Weapons Convention — which has given global security a significant objective, namely, the total elimination of chemical weapons — as a very important Convention. However, I am surprised that some of the representatives here have chosen to try to deride the topic under discussion and to deal with issues that are not at all part of the debate in this meeting.

Our Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, stated when Israel signed the Convention, in 1993, that there is no weapon against weapons of mass destruction, only political determination. The fact that Israeli citizens are obliged to be equipped with chemical-weapon-protection gear is itself proof of the degree of threat to our citizens, in particular of the threat from countries in the region that are notorious for their use and possession of chemical weapons.

It is not a coincidence that the two countries that have questioned the procedures for convening this meeting did not on the other hand even question the

procedure for convening the tenth emergency special session. One might suspect that those objections emanate from a well-known position of Syria and Egypt, which has been reflected in their reluctance even to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention as they continue to possess those weapons.

Israel signed the Chemical Weapons Convention in January 1993, and is obligated under international law to the moral principle of global chemical disarmament. At the signature ceremony, Israel expressed its hope that other countries in the region would follow suit; the reality, unfortunately, is in stark contrast to that. These circumstances certainly pose difficulties in terms of taking the decision whether to ratify the Convention or not. Israel hopes that the environment in the Middle East, in which hostility and non-recognition are still prevalent, will change soon in a manner that will enable Israel to take the decision to ratify the Convention.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation listened carefully to the statement by Mr. Bustani, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and I took special note of what he said about the situation in the Middle East; he said that Libya was among several States in the region that had not yet acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Let me stress that my country is now a party to most international disarmament conventions, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), because Libya wishes to participate in international efforts to put an end to the production of weapons of mass destruction. My country has made clear in all international forums the reason why Libya has yet to join the Chemical Weapons Convention: the security imbalance in the Middle East resulting from the fact that Israel possesses hundreds of nuclear warheads and has to date refused, in spite of constant international appeals, to accede to the NPT or to place its nuclear installations under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system.

Mr. Bustani addressed only part of the situation in the Middle East when he named several States and indicated that they were still outside the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. But he ought to have mentioned the reasons why those States have not yet adhered to the Convention. He is well acquainted with those reasons, because those States — including, as I have said, Libya — have explained why they have not acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We have explained this in the General Assembly and in other international forums, and we might have hoped that Mr. Bustani would have mentioned the true reasons for those States not having acceded to the Convention.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to respond to the statement of the representative of Israel a moment ago. After listening to his statement, everyone can see clearly that Israel does indeed possess chemical weapons and that it considers the possession and stockpiling of such weapons to be a means of providing security for its citizens. If every State in the world followed that obviously unacceptable Israeli logic, there would be no international conventions on the prohibition of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons, because every country would offer the excuse that it had to protect the safety and security of its citizens.

This proves again that the Arabs are the Middle Eastern parties that actually need security and safety. The Arabs do not possess nuclear weapons with which to defend themselves; nor do they possess other categories of weapons that can counter the challenges laid down by Israel as it occupies Arab lands and suppresses Arab citizens in those occupied territories.

I was surprised to hear the Israeli representative's fantastical comparison when two delegations objected to the procedures used to consider the item before us, and to the content of the statement of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons: how could he compare this to the emergency special session on the massacres inflicted on the Palestinian people? That reflects Israel's aggressive nature and its defiance of the international community. In fact, convening an emergency special session was the minimum we could do to put an end to the massacres inflicted upon the Palestinian people.

Once more, we come back to one constant fact: there can be no peace in the Middle East without a commitment by Israel to the resolutions adopted by the international community, and without Israel's withdrawal from all the occupied territories to the borders of 4 June 1967. Israel must give up its dream of dominating the region by threatening to use or using weapons of mass destruction. The international community bears primary responsibility to pressure Israel to take genuine action to achieve a just, lasting

and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and to enable us all to work towards the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons and chemical weapons.

Mr. Darwish (Egypt) *(spoke in Arabic)*: The representative of Israel criticized Egypt's observation on the need to abide by the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. He linked that with the Assembly's decision to resume the tenth emergency special session. We wonder about the connection between the two issues. The resumption by the General Assembly of the tenth emergency special session is a matter that has been decided upon, and the debate on this vital and important issue will resume this afternoon.

Mr. Itzchaki (Israel): I am sorry that I have to speak once again in exercise of the right of reply. I promise to be very brief.

I listened to the statement made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic in exercise of the right of reply, and I fail to understand the logic behind his words. The fact that Israeli citizens are obliged to be equipped with safety gear to protect themselves from chemical weapons does not indicate anything whatsoever about Israel's capabilities of any kind. The fact is that Israeli citizens were, and still are, under the threat of chemical weapons, inter alia, from countries like his own.

The second point I wish to raise is that I would ask the Syrian representative, and even recommend to him, that he not lecture us about massacres and that he should not speak on behalf of the Palestinians. These issues are rather serious and are under consideration between us and the Palestinians. Nobody gave the Syrian representative a mandate to represent the Palestinians here, especially given his country's record of massacres in this regard, which I would rather not mention in this forum.

The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.